

Daniel's Vision Of Chapter Nine, Part III

Valley Center Seventh-day Adventist Church

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One day in Jerusalem two men were walking down the narrow crowded street. There were on a mission, sent by their superiors to arrest a man who was reputed to be a trouble-making insurgent. They neared a corner, and then heard the melodious, compassionate tones of the Nazarene Teacher. As they approached, they were spellbound. There were themselves arrested, captivated by His gentle but powerful words. They forgot why they had come there and stood, held fast by His discourse.

Eventually it came to them why they were there, but the ropes, shackles, or whatever it was they had brought with them to effect their assignment, would not be used that day. They returned to their post, and when asked why Jesus was not with them, they could only manage the response, "No one ever spoke like this Man."

Oh, that I could declare the love God with the same kindness and clarity as He did! Like Paul we feel, as touching the marvelous Good News of God, "who is sufficient for these things?"

Our lesson today focuses on one of the most explicit prophecies in the Scriptures, declaring the time and purpose of the Messiah's mission. Daniel nine is one of the sparkling highlights of all the Old Testament, foretelling the coming of the Savior. Those who aligned themselves against the purposes of God, the priests whose hearts did not beat in harmony with God's plan, tired of hearing of this passage and its application to the One called Christ, eventually pronouncing a curse on anyone studying or referring to this text.

Nor were devout Jews the only ones who studied the prophecy of Daniel nine. Satan was busy also with his prophetic slide rule, charting the progress of time, ready with imposters to lay claim to the fulfillment of the prophecy, the result of which would be to confuse the superficial student. His intent was simple: to muddy the waters with counterfeit claimants, so that the casual observer, when told of Jesus of Nazareth, would shrug off the conviction with an "Oh, just another one of

those” reply. Theudas and Judas of Galilee, who arose “in the time of the census” were among the false leaders who were rivals to the cloak of messiahship. Acts 5:36, 37.

But we’re jumping ahead of our study. Let’s go back a moment. Remember that Daniel had received a vision in chapter eight. A menacing horn was destroying wonderfully, pulling stars from the sky, casting Truth to the ground and desolating the sanctuary. In response to the question voiced in the vision, “How long the trampling?” a period of time was given, “unto 2,300 days, then the sanctuary would be justified.” The angel Gabriel was commissioned to make Daniel understand the vision, but when Gabriel left, Daniel said “no one understood it.”

So Daniel studied the Sacred Writings, and understood by the message given through the prophet Jeremiah that God would accomplish seventy years in the captivity of Judah. Daniel was confused, especially concerning the time period of 2300 days. Was it a lengthening of the 70 years of captivity? Was God going to delay the promised restoration of the city and the temple? Daniel prayed earnestly that God would keep His covenant promise and “cause His face to shine” upon them in the blessing of a rebuilt city and sanctuary and not to delay the fulfillment of the promise “for the Lord’s sake” and the honor of His name.

“Now while I was speaking, praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God, yes, while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, reached me about the time of the evening offering. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, ‘O Daniel, I have now come forth to give you skill to understand. At the beginning of your supplications the command went out, and I have come to tell you, for you are greatly beloved; therefore consider the matter, and understand the vision.’” Daniel 9:20-23.

We talked in the past two weeks of Daniel’s prayer of confession, in which he acknowledged the rebellion of his people which resulted in the desolation of their once beautiful city and sanctuary. We discussed how that ruined sanctuary represents the world as a whole, our country of America, the Church and our hearts. Just last week I saw on the news something which shocked and disappointed me. The newsman reported a segment on a certain television channel devoted to comedy in which singer Willie Nelson, dressed up as a “wise man” was featured singing what was obviously a parody of a nativity song.

One of the key elements of his song was the offering he was presenting to the Christ Child. Was it an offering of myrrh or incense that he gave to the infant Savior? No, it was the drug marijuana, the smoke of which ascended as he sang his unholy ballad. The distinctive leaves of the noxious plant were superimposed in the skit as the audience celebrated the blasphemy of the scene with uproarious laughter. Unheard of mockery! Unimagined irreverence! I couldn't believe what I was seeing. My wife burst out in tears. What have we come to? How art thou fallen from heaven, America! The sanctuary indeed is desolate. Well should we repent and confess the sin of our nation as did Daniel the nation of Israel.

The Relationship of Daniel 8 and Nine

Before we go any further, we need to analyze the return of Gabriel and the message of explanation he will bring with particular emphasis on the relationship between what Gabriel will say in these verses and the vision of chapter eight, which had challenged Daniel's thinking. I will propose to you that the two chapters, Daniel eight and nine, are directly connected and cannot be correctly understood apart from each other.

Elder H.M.S. Richards, beloved founder of the Voice of Prophecy radio program, used to tell the story of a driver of a car at a stop sign waiting for the evening traffic to break. Finally it looked like things were going to clear, as a pickup went across before him, followed by what he adjudged was adequate space. The driver started out into the intersection only to encounter a strange impediment. It seems the pickup was pulling another vehicle, attached by a chain which the driver of the car couldn't see in the dusk. Disaster! So it is with Daniel eight and nine. They are linked by a chain of logic, which if unseen by the casual reader, will result in misunderstanding and misapprehension. Here are some of the links in the chain.

1) It is the same Gabriel in chapter nine who appeared to Daniel in chapter eight. The name "Gabriel" means "God is my strength," or "mighty one of God." It is composed of the Hebrew verb *gabar* which means "to have strength, to prevail" plus the letter "i" which means "my," and the last part, "El," which is an abbreviated form of the name *Elohim*, or God. You see the same "iel" ending in the name *Daniel*. Later Gabriel informed Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, that he "stands in the presence of God." Luke 1:19. That would make him one of God's most highly positioned angels. Daniel said, "the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning" was the one who returned to give additional understanding. Gabriel's presence in chapter nine is a clear link to his coming to Daniel in chapter eight.

2) In chapter eight, a command was given by God: “Gabriel, make this man understand the vision” (8:16), but when Gabriel left, Daniel said that “none understood it,” leaving the impression that a return visit would be necessary to complete the assignment. When he came back, Gabriel said, “I have now come forth to give you skill to understand.” Daniel 9:22.

3) All of the symbols in the vision of chapter eight, the ram, the goat and the horn, had been explained by Gabriel in his previous visit. The only thing that had not been explained was the matter of the time period. Daniel had been particularly confused as to the 2300 days, expressing his cherished hope that they would not be a lengthening of the captivity by the phrase, “Do not delay.” Daniel 9:19. Much of Gabriel’s explanation in chapter nine bears directly on the matter of time.

4) Although a time period is brought to view in the vision of chapter eight, the 2300 days, there is no beginning point established. When would the 2300 days begin? On the other hand, a very definite beginning point is laid out in chapter 9 with the words, “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks.” Daniel 9:25.

5) When Gabriel returns to Daniel he says, “Therefore consider the matter and understand the vision.” Daniel 9:23. There being no intervening vision requiring explanation, the only reasonable conclusion is that he is referring to “the vision” of chapter eight, which Daniel confessed he didn’t understand.

6) The word for “vision” that has been used in the Book of Daniel through chapter seven has been the word *chezev*, which means primarily “vision, appearance, night vision, or prophetic dream.” The only exception to this is found in Daniel 1 where it says, “Daniel had understanding in visions (*chazon*) and dreams.” Daniel 1:17 In chapter eight, nine and thereafter, two words for “vision” are used: *chazon*, which means “dream, revelation, or oracle” found in Daniel 8:1, 2, 13, 15, 17, 26; 9:21, 24 and *mareh*, which means “sight or appearance” and is found in Daniel 8:15, 26, 27; 9:23. Some scholars make the distinction that *chazon* refers to the whole of a vision, while *mareh* refers to a part of the larger whole. This distinction seems to make sense when we note how the words are used in the narrative. The bottom line is that up through the end of chapter seven, with the one exception noted, the word *chezev* is used, while beginning in chapter eight *chezev* is not found again while *chazon* and *mareh* are used, which did not appear before chapter eight. So, when the angel says, “consider the vision” (*mareh*) in 9:23, and that word has not been used before chapter eight, and it is the word that is used in chapter eight when

Gabriel is told to “make this man understand the vision,” it is most reasonable to conclude that he is pointing Daniel to the vision of chapter eight and none other.

It follows logically then that chapters eight and nine of Daniel are *inseparably linked* and that the explanation Gabriel gives in chapter nine relates directly to the vision of chapter eight. Furthermore, since no beginning point is referenced for the vision of chapter eight and one is established in chapter nine, it follows that the beginning point Gabriel establishes in chapter nine is also the starting point for the vision of chapter eight and that the shorter period of time, the seventy weeks of chapter nine are a part of, in fact the beginning part of the larger period of chapter eight.

Seventy Weeks

Let us then turn our attention to the content of Gabriel’s message. “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.

“Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks. The street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times.

“And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined. Then He shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; but in the middle of the week he shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, even until the consummation, which is determined, is poured out on the desolate.” Daniel 9:24-27.

In a nutshell, what we’re going to find out is that this explanatory message gives “way marks” for the confirmation of “the vision,” specifying certain goals and objectives to be accomplished within the period, highlighting the reconstruction of Jerusalem and leading to the appearance and mission of the promised Messiah. Finally, the cherished city of Jerusalem and its crown jewel of the temple, which at that time lay in ruins through the invasions of Nebuchadnezzar, would be rebuilt, only to be again destroyed. The fate of the beloved city, its ruination, rebuilding and destruction would act as the “bookends” of the seventy weeks. The temple was

desolate at the beginning of the seventy weeks and it would be desolate at the end of the seventy weeks.

Seventy Weeks / 490 Years

“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.” Daniel 9:24. So confident were some Bible translators that the “day for a year” rule applied to this prophecy that some versions read “seventy weeks of years.” Those words “of years” are not in the original text, and there is no real purpose in their being added, since the scope of the prophecy, beginning with the decree to rebuild Jerusalem and leading to the appearance of the Messiah demands the “day for a year” application.

The question must then be raised, “If the seventy weeks are to be understood in a ‘day for a year’ manner, amounting to 490 literal years, and if these seventy weeks are a part of the 2300 days of chapter eight, would it not also make sense that the 2300 days must also be interpreted by the ‘day for a year’ format, making them 2300 literal years?” This deduction is rational in the light of Gabriel’s comment regarding the 2300 days, that it “refers to the end,” and that he was making known to you “what shall happen in the latter time of the indignation, for at the appointed time the end shall be.” Daniel 8:17, 19. With that in mind, the principle of the “day for a year” in symbolic prophecy applying to the 2300 days is unavoidable.

A Time of Probation

Let’s think for a moment about the period of seventy weeks. There being seven days in a week, that makes 490 days, or years. Do we find anything in the Bible having to do with this number? Yes, we do! One time Peter asked his Lord, “How often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Matthew 18:21. The prevailing wisdom said that there was a limit of three times that one had to forgive. It was their version of a “three strikes” rule. Peter, knowing the forgiving nature of Jesus, perceived that “three” would not be the right answer, so he doubled it and then added one more for good measure and came up with seven.

What did Jesus say? “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to *seventy times seven*.” Matthew 18:22. Interesting! Seventy times seven, the same number as days in seventy weeks. So, one might deduce that the number “seventy times seven,” or 490, represents an expression of the limit of divine forbearance.

God is patient beyond human comprehension, as illustrated by Jesus' answer to Peter's question, but there is a limit beyond which His mercy is no longer available. In a sense, it's not that God has withdrawn His grace; it's that man has positioned himself through persistent rebellion beyond the hearing of mercy's voice. We're counseled in the Bible not to grieve the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 4:30. We're told about those who by repetitive sinning sear their consciences like a hot iron. I Timothy 4:2. This applies equally to individuals as well as to nations.

Abraham was obliged to be a stranger and pilgrim in Canaan, not possessing so much as a foot step of the land, "till the iniquity of the Amorites was full," which amounted to a period of 400 years. Genesis 15:13, 16. A probationary period was granted the inhabitants of Canaan, during which the candle of Abraham's witness lighted the way to the knowledge of God. If, after their day of opportunity passed and they had not acted on the generous invitation of the Spirit, and they were dispossessed of the land by the Israelites, God was justified in this act. The probationary time had passed. The opportunity to cooperate with the divine plan was a limited offer.

But because Israel was now going to possess houses they had not built and vineyards they had not planted did not mean that they weren't under the same policy as had been the previous occupants. Surrender to the divine will was enjoined upon them also, for God is no respecter of persons. This was the gigantic mistake that Israel made, thinking that because God had so generously placed them in the land of promise they were exempt from obeying Him to retain their heritage. Not so! Repeatedly through the ministry of the prophets the nation was called to repent and return to the God of their fathers.

The nation was, in the story of Daniel, at a crossroads. Through rebellion, they had reaped the consequences of their choices and God had withdrawn His protection, suffering them to go into captivity. Another opportunity was going to be given them to comply with the divine plan. But this was a period of probation. This period of time would climax in the coming of God's own Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to bring in everlasting righteousness. How would the nation respond to Him? Would they receive Him as Savior and Lord? Would they love and obey Him? History tells us the sad answer to that question is "No." "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." John 1:11.

When He came, Jesus told a parable which, when taken in the context of the seventy weeks, sheds a great deal of light on God's purpose for this period of time. This parable was given on Tuesday of Passion Week, just days before they would

clamor for His crucifixion. “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country.

“Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

“Then *last of all he sent his son* to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?

“They said to Him, ‘He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.’

“Jesus said to them, ‘Did you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.” Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.’ Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them.” Matthew 21:33-45.

After bearing a thousand years with the nation of Israel, God would give them another chance. This period of 490 years would be their final opportunity to walk in step with heaven’s program. Notice very carefully the words of Jesus, “*last of all He sent His Son.*” The coming of the Messiah would represent Israel’s last chance. How they responded to the Savior’s mission would constitute their final opportunity. How it must have broken Daniel’s heart when he realized that even after the personal coming of the Messiah, his beloved nation would once more reap the whirlwind of destruction through their rejection of God.

And so it is that God gives to each one of us an opportunity, a time of probation to respond to His generous offer of grace. How we react to that provision has eternal consequences. That window of opportunity is not promised forever. There is a limit to divine forbearance. How important it is, then, that we fall on the Rock today in contrition and be broken in humility! No one is promised tomorrow. “Today if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts,” is the heavenly

wisdom. “Today is the day of salvation.” I invite you to give your heart to Jesus today. Ask Him to take complete charge of your life. Tell Him you’re sorry for your sins and want Him to change your way of thinking. He will listen! He will do it! He is a perfect Savior!